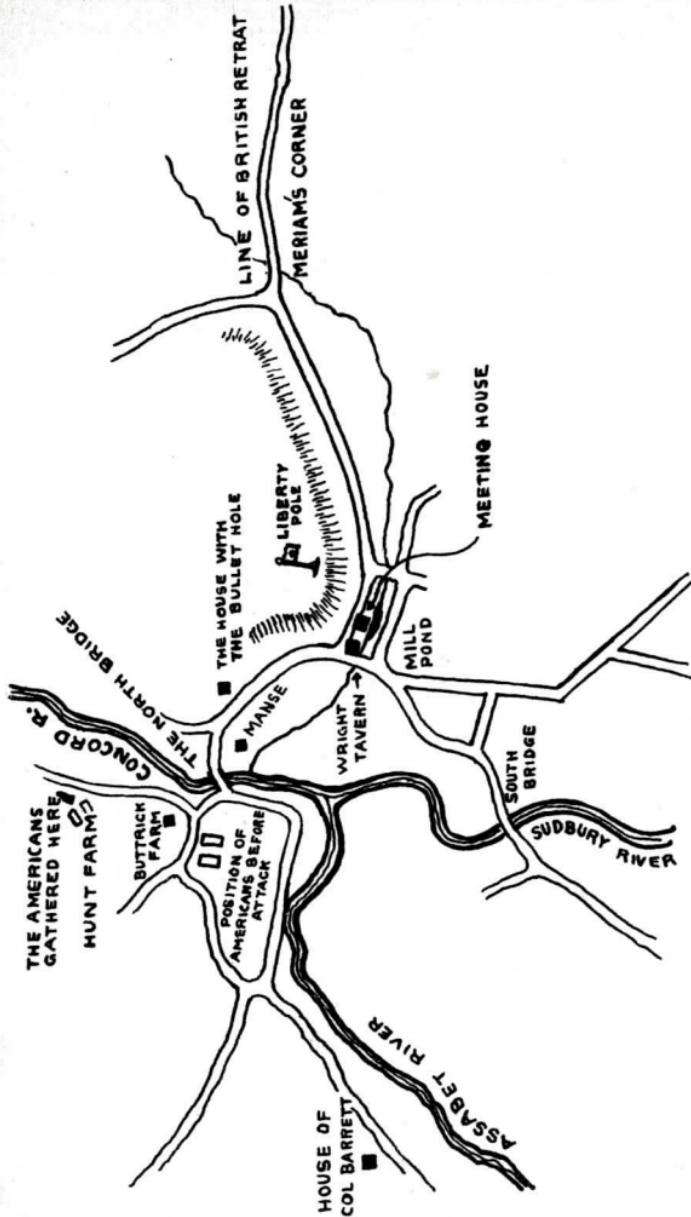




Historic Concord



Map illustrating Concord Fight, April 19, 1775
The Americans retreated from the Liberty Pole to the Hunt Farm, then near the Buttrick Farm they formed for the attack.
(Modern roads are not shown.)

HISTORIC CONCORD



Compliments of





Home of Ralph Waldo Emerson.
—Concord



HISTORIC CONCORD

CONCORD in Massachusetts, founded in 1635, received its name because of its peaceful treaty with the Indians, upon whose friendliness the colonists depended. And yet, in spite of its name, the first great significance of Concord in American history is that at its North Bridge began our Revolutionary War. In 1774, when the bonds between this country and England were strained to the point of breaking, Concord was so large and so devoted to the patriot cause that the provincial congresses (Boston being held by a British army) held their meetings in Concord, and began to gather military stores for an army of their own. Feeling that these stores must be seized or else destroyed, the British governor, General Gage, sent soldiers against Concord.

He expected complete success. It is true that he knew of the formation everywhere of companies of minute-men, but his officers, sent out as spies, reported that, having seen the drilling of this militia, they considered it harmless. In order, however, to irritate the people as little as possible, Gage planned

for a sudden and secret stroke. Late in the evening of April 18, 1775, seven hundred of his men embarked at the foot of Boston Common, and were rowed across to the Cambridge shore. None of the Americans, the General thought, suspected his plans.

He did not know the people with whom he had to deal. Watchers had understood every movement of the troops, and the men were scarcely in their boats before messengers were under way to Concord. William Dawes went by way of Roxbury; and Paul Revere, rowing over to Charlestown, took horse, and, dodging a cavalry patrol, rode by way of Medford. The two men alarmed the country all along their routes, and met in Lexington.

Here John Hancock and Samuel Adams, patriot leaders, whose safety was important, were sleeping at the house of the Reverend Mr. Clarke, and a guard of minute-men was at the door. These men, when Revere rode up, asked him to make no noise. "Noise?" answered Revere. "You'll have noise enough before morning. The regulars are coming out!" Recognizing Revere's voice, Hancock ordered that he be admitted. The fiery Hancock wished to stay and fight, but was persuaded to go with Adams to safety. Revere, Dawes, and a young Dr. Prescott, who had been visiting his sweetheart in Lexington, started together for Concord.

Halfway between the towns, where now stands a memorial tablet, the three were stopped by a patrol of British officers. Dawes turned back and escaped, Revere was taken, but young Prescott, knowing the country, jumped his horse over a wall and got safely to Concord, where he told his news. Revere alarmed his captors by the statement that the country was

aroused against them, and hearing the sound of minute guns, they let him go, but on foot. He was able to save the papers of Hancock and Adams.

IN the meantime Gage's "secret" expedition, which was to have accomplished its raid so quickly, was delayed for hours on the flats at East Cambridge, waiting for supplies. Although when once under way it marched so fast that it surprised and captured scouts sent out from Lexington to spy on its approach, its leaders were disappointed in their hope to reach Concord without meeting the militia.

The Lexington company had been under arms since soon after the coming of Revere, but when the long wait caused a doubt whether the troops were coming, the company was allowed to separate, subject, nevertheless, to immediate call. Upon sudden notice of the approach of the British, the minute-men were hastily mustered, but not in full numbers. Not



more than seventy men stood in line on Lexington green when the redcoats came in sight. Immediately, under Major Pitcairn, a detachment advanced against the Americans. Without even the protection of a wall, it would have been folly for the minute-men to engage ten times their number, and, yielding to the situation, Captain Parker gave the order to disperse. It was while the farmers were slowly and sullenly breaking ranks, that the British detachment made its attack.

Its leader, Pitcairn, was a man esteemed even by his enemies; he always denied that he gave the command to fire. But he ordered the "rebels" to disperse and lay down their arms, and, perhaps mistaking his words, his men, "so wild that they could hear no orders," rushed forward and fired. Several of the retreating Americans fell, and it was then that some of the survivors returned the fire. But they stood no chance. Eight of the men of Lexington were killed, and ten wounded. Pathetic was the death of Jonathan Harrington, dragging himself to his doorstep hard by the green, and dying at the feet of his wife. Scattered, but not yet beaten, the men of Lexington rallied and prepared for their revenge.

Ignorant of this Lexington bloodshed, in Concord the minute-men gathered at the sound of the alarm bell, but in small numbers, because, since late in the day before, they had been carting the stores to places of safety, and many of them were still at the work. The Lincoln company, however, arrived early. When word was brought that the British were in sight, the Concord minister, Rev. William Emerson, urged the militia to stand their ground; but the leaders were wiser, and withdrew them from the town. Unopposed, the British marched in and took possession of the

almost empty village. Immediately they began a search for military stores.

But the patriots had been too quick for them; many of the stores were already away, and others were concealed. Some were saved by prevarication. A miller, standing among barrels of flour belonging to the province, laid his hand upon a barrel of his own. "This is my flour," he declared, and the British officer led his searching party away. Some flour belonging to the province was found and rolled into the mill pond, some bullets were thrown into a well, two large cannon were temporarily disabled, and wooden spoons and cannon wheels were burned. As the bullets and much of the flour were salvaged, the British really failed in the object of their expedition.

About two miles out of town was the farm of Colonel Barrett, and knowing that stores were also there, Colonel Smith, the British commander, a fat and fussy person, sent out a detachment to search the place. While three companies under Captain Laurie held the North Bridge, another three under Captain Parsons crossed the bridge and marched to the farm. Yet also here the stores had been hidden. A bed of plants had been lifted and stores buried under them, and the plants reset; in the attic of the house, bullets, cartridges, and flints had been covered by feathers; and even while the approaching redcoats were in sight, a ploughman was coolly turning his furrows upon hidden cannon. Again the searching party found little.

Perhaps irritated at his failures, and certainly ignorant of his real situation, Major Pitcairn, at the Wright Tavern, his headquarters at Concord Square, stirred his brandy with his finger and said, "I hope I shall stir the damned Yankee blood so before night."

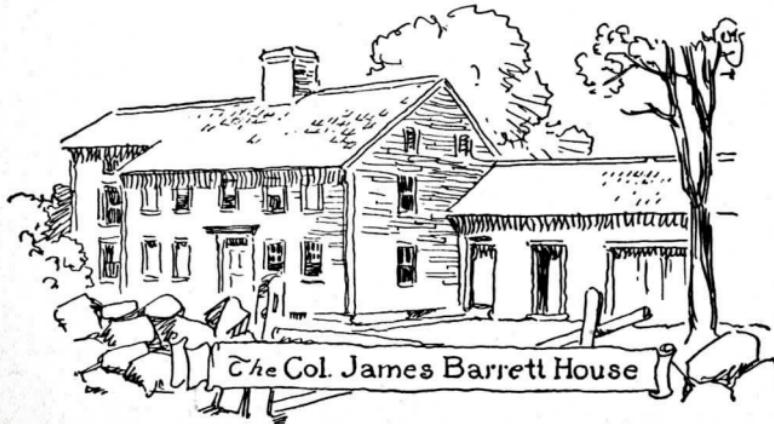
The symbol was unnecessary, for the Yankee blood was already sufficiently stirred. On a height beyond the bridge the minute-men were gathering from towns near at hand, Concord men were returning from saving the stores, and the leaders were angered by the sight of smoke from the British bonfires. The Concord adjutant demanded, "Will you let them burn the town down?" The Lincoln captain urged an attack on the bridge, and the Acton captain, Isaac Davis, said, "I haven't a man that's afraid to go." The Concord colonel, Barrett, too old and heavy to march, but still able to sit his horse and not afraid to risk the punishment for treason, ordered the advance and gave the command into the hands of his active major, John Buttrick. With the Acton company leading, Davis at its head and Buttrick by his side, and followed by a Concord company and then by others, the little force of some four hundred and fifty men put itself in motion and in column of twos marched down to the bridge.

THE visitor to the spot can understand the action today, for except that the road across the meadows has vanished, the place is unchanged. The English captain, caught between this superior force and the river, hastily withdrew his companies across the bridge and awkwardly drew them up one behind another, thus preventing any effective fire. When some of his men began taking up the planks of the bridge, Buttrick shouted to them an order to stop. The British replied by a few warning shots fired into the river, and then as the Americans approached the other bank, fired a volley at that close range. The Acton captain was killed. Buttrick, turning to his men,

gave the well-known command, "Fire, fellow soldiers, for God's sake, fire!" The American volley was effective. Leaving two of their men dying on the ground, the British hastily retreated, many of them wounded.

On the road of their retreat, stand two houses almost facing each other. One is the Manse built by William Emerson, to the grounds of which the warlike pastor had retired for the defense and comfort of his family and a flock of his parishioners who had gathered there. From this place he watched the fight, and hailed with joy the success of his countrymen.

The Manse is a hundred yards from the road, but the house of Elisha Jones, opposite, is close to the highway. As the British poured by in disorderly retreat, Jones, who had been guarding his family and a store of army provisions, was so reckless as to show himself at the door of a wing of his house. A British soldier took a hasty shot at him, only to pierce the woodwork a couple of feet from the man. The mark still shows in Concord's "house with the bullet hole."



There remained for Colonel Smith but two things to do. One was to recall his three companies from the Barrett farm; the second, to depart for Boston as hastily as possible. In fact, he did neither. Smith made no effort to safeguard the return of Captain Parsons, who, starting for the town as soon as he heard the firing, was allowed to cross the bridge only because the Americans did not yet consider themselves at war. And it was not till afternoon that Smith started on his long march to Boston. In leaving the town, as in entering, the troops followed Lexington Road, which on its northern side is flanked by a ridge. As the regulars marched past one side of this ridge, the farmers, cutting across the fields, hurried along the further side. At Meriam's Corner, where the ridge dies away, the two parties came into view of one another. The rear guard of the British halted and fired at their pursuers, who fired in return. Again the British retreated, leaving their dead behind them, and hampered by their wounded.

And thus began the running fight which soon carried the combatants out of the territory of Concord. Every schoolboy knows that Smith's expedition was saved only by the coming of a stronger detachment of troops from Boston, under Lord Percy. On that day the British regulars learned the quality of the Americans. "Lord Percy said, at table, he never saw anything equal to the intrepidity of the New England minute-men." Among these were the men of Lexington, who amply took their revenge.

CONCORD'S further military history is not striking; the fame of the town is next based on the fact that eminent writers have made it their home.

Greatest, as well as first, was Ralph Waldo Emerson, grandson of the manly minister who built the Manse. Though born in Boston (1803), Emerson frequently visited at the Manse during his youth, and in his early thirties wrote there his first great book of essays, "Nature." After retiring from his ministry in Boston, seeking a retreat in which to think and write, he turned naturally toward Concord, where he bought, in 1835, the house on the Cambridge turnpike which still is pointed out to tourists.

In many ways the house is unchanged since his day. His study is just as he left it, and indeed all the lower part of the house is furnished much as it was in his lifetime. It was this house from which, when it took fire, his neighbors rescued his furniture and books; and after a voyage to Europe, returning to find the house completely renovated by his friends, it was under an arch erected by his neighbors that he entered the familiar grounds. The trees about the house were planted by the philosopher; in the garden and orchard he walked and worked; even the bird-house on the barn is a careful copy of the one which, made by Thoreau, was put up to please Emerson.

The literary life of Emerson, spent mostly in Concord, is a peaceful record of the writing of great thoughts. As a neighbor he was friendly and kind; as a citizen he always performed his duty; he lived the simple life of a gentleman of modest means, surrounded by the affection of all. He pondered his great ideas while walking in the fields and woods; in his study he gave them permanent form. Then, after testing them upon his lecture tours, he gave them to the world in his famous volumes of essays. Emerson did not build up a connected system of thought,

but, with a depth of wisdom combined with Yankee shrewdness, he did better: he set forth ideals of thought and conduct which greatly changed the thinking of his day, and form the basis of much of our modern practical philosophy. Emerson's most celebrated saying is, perhaps, his "Hitch your wagon to a star," which in its homeliness and far-reaching wisdom might be called the watchword of our nation today. Although he was no politician, Emerson, in his Concord study, was yet probably the strongest single force behind Lincoln in his great struggle. It was because of his practical idealism that Emerson became known as the Sage of Concord.

Emerson's more famous books are "Nature" (1836), the two series of "Essays" (1841, 1844), "Representative Men" (1850), "The Conduct of Life" (1860), "Society and Solitude" (1870). Besides these, he published his few but immortal poems, which varied from the simple thought of "The Mountain and the Squirrel" to the philosophic depth of "Brahma." Best known are his "Rhodora," "Duty," "Forbearance," "Ode to Beauty," "The Concord Ode" (the first stanza of which is on the base of the Minute-Man Statue), "The Snowstorm," and "Threnody."

Emerson died in April, 1882. His house, and his grave in Sleepy Hollow cemetery, are still objects of pilgrimage.

NATHONIEL HAWTHORNE came to Concord in 1842, bringing his bride to the Manse. Here for three years and a half he maintained a curious seclusion. Very happy in his marriage, he cared little for outsiders, though Emerson and Thoreau were welcome. At the Manse he was visited by Franklin

Pierce, the future president, Hawthorne's dearest friend. But mostly Hawthorne and his wife, even after his first child was born, lived in the Manse in close retirement, while he wrote the stories that comprise his "Mosses from an Old Manse."

Hawthorne left Concord in 1845, to return to it in 1852, when he bought from Mr. Alcott the house which he named the "Wayside," still standing on Lexington Road. Here in his first visit, which was but a year long, he wrote his "Tanglewood Tales." He went to Liverpool as consul, and returned again in 1860, to spend at the "Wayside" the last four years of his life. He made additions to the house, especially the tower, into which, though he had become a much more genial man, he would retire for the seclusion that he loved. On the hill behind the house, his feet wore the path that is still to be seen there, for here he paced up and down, thinking out his stories. But these last years of his life were not productive; the Civil War made him deeply unhappy, and his own strength was gone. Starting with Pierce to the White Mountains



for a vacation, he died suddenly. His body was brought back to Concord, and buried in Sleepy Hollow.

Less great than either Emerson or Hawthorne, and yet a figure in American literature, Henry David Thoreau was born in Concord in 1817. Though such a mechanical genius that he could have made much money by applying himself to the lead-pencil process which he perfected, he preferred to study nature, and to live from his surveyings and writings. His birth-place on the Virginia Road has been removed, but he occupied with his parents the house on Main Street (Number 73), which later the Alcotts lived in, and which is the chief survivor of his various Concord dwellings. Most famous of his homes was his hut at Walden pond, two miles from the town, where for two years and a half he lived alone. From his journals of his observations and experiences he wrote his "Walden," the greatest of his books. The site of the hut is now marked by a cairn of stones. Thoreau avowed himself a Concord man, for away from the town he could not be happy. A close friend of Emerson and Hawthorne, and also of John Brown, he was an anti-slavery man to the core. Full of Emerson's philosophy, he yet was an original genius. He died in the Main Street house, in its downstairs living-room, in 1862.

COMPLETING the circle of Concord's famous writers were Amos Bronson Alcott and his daughter, Louisa May Alcott. Alcott was a philosopher, an impractical, lovable man, whose books today are little read, but whose personality, visionary and benevolent, is not to be forgotten. Moving from the "Wayside," the house which he sold to Hawthorne,

Alcott established himself next door in the "Orchard House," the scene of "Little Women" and today a museum of family mementoes, preserving the story of the charming and wholesome family circle. On the grounds he built, late in life, the School of Philosophy, which is today removed to the woods behind; in it, for ten years, met a summer school for the study of philosophy, Alcott's favorite science. Later, the family removed to the Main Street house of the Thoreaus, which was Mr. Alcott's residence up to the time of his death in 1888.

Louisa May Alcott, born in 1832, will always be remembered as the author of "Little Women," which was partly written in the "Orchard House" in 1868, and which is still today perhaps the best-loved American book. She was a nurse in the Civil War, and turned to writing as a means of saving the family fortunes. "Little Women" tells the story of her youth, and is better than any of her other books, though "Little Men," "Eight Cousins," "An Old-Fashioned Girl," and others, will long be popular among young people. Miss Alcott died two days after her father.

BESESIDES the inspiring story of the Fight, and besides the great books which issued from the pens of Concord writers, there came from this town one material gift to the world, the Concord Grape. The yearly value of modern commerce in its products is rated at many millions, and yet the breeder of this grape died in poverty. He was Ephraim Wales Bull, born in Boston in 1806, a goldbeater who came to Concord in 1836 because of poor health, and on his small place on the Lexington Road became so fond of horticulture that he devoted his life to the breeding

of grapes. By skill, perseverance, and that touch of good fortune which always is necessary for success in this work, he was able in 1852 to show the Concord Grape before the Massachusetts Horticultural Society. Its success was immediate, but Mr. Bull was no business man, and while nurserymen made much money from the grape, his own fortunes so greatly declined, that for some years before his death in 1895 he was supported by friends. On his tombstone are the words, "He sowed, others reaped."

CONCORD is now a place of some six thousand people, having in general the mixed character of a farming and residential town. It is very much of a place of pilgrimage, where are to be seen its historical memorials. The houses of the famous writers, and Mr. Bull's Grapevine Cottage, are all still standing, with the Wright Tavern; but the meeting-house where the provincial congresses met has been burned and rebuilt. The North Bridge stands merely in a reproduction; near by are the two monuments to the Fight, and the grave of the British soldiers. Tablets mark places of local interest, among them Meriam's Corner, where the running fight began. There is an interesting Antiquarian Society, and a good Public Library. Besides Daniel C. French's "Minute-Man" at the bridge, his statue of Emerson is in the Public Library, and his fine Melvin Memorial is in Sleepy Hollow cemetery. In the cemetery also, on the beautiful and secluded ridge, lie buried close together Concord's famous writers, and near them the breeder of the Grape. In this one town, these many reminders of a great past are to be seen unchanged in almost their original surroundings.

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The Old Manse
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